

Catawba County Board of Commissioners  
Regular Session, Tuesday, January 20, 2009

**Appointments**

Catawba County Board of Adjustment	284	01/20/09
Town of Catawba Planning and Zoning Board	284	01/20/09
Town of Maiden Planning Board	284	01/20/09
Volunteer Fire Department Trustees, Fireman's Relief Fund	284	01/20/09
Resource and Referral Service	284	01/20/09
Catawba County Agricultural Advisory Board	284	01/20/09

**Board of Commissioners**

Change in Subcommittee Time	285	01/20/09
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**Catawba County Schools**

Appropriation and transfer of funds for Old St. Stephens Elementary Demolition	284	01/20/09
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**CVCC**

Appropriation for purchase of former Fire Mountain Restaurant property	286	01/20/09
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**Legislative Agenda**

Addition to – Increase in Occupancy Tax – Enabling Legislation	287	01/20/09
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**Public Hearing**

Neighborhood Stabilization Program Grant Application	283	01/20/09
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**Social Services**

Elder Plan	285	01/20/09
Children's Agenda	286	01/20/09

The Catawba County Board of Commissioners met in regular session on January 20, 2009 at 7:00 p.m. in the 1924 Courthouse, Robert E. Hibbitts Meeting Room, 30 North College Avenue, Newton, North Carolina.

Present were Chair Katherine W. Barnes, Vice-Chair Lynn Lail and Commissioners Dan Hunsucker, Glenn Barger and Barbara G. Beatty.

Also present were County Manager J. Thomas Lundy, Assistant County Manager Lee Worsley, Assistant County Manager Dewey Harris, County Attorney Debra Bechtel, Deputy County Attorney Anne Marie Pease and County Clerk Barbara Morris.

1. Chair Katherine W. Barnes called the meeting to order at 7:05 p.m.
2. Commissioner Glenn Barger led the Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag.
3. Chair Barnes offered the invocation.
4. Commissioner Dan Hunsucker made a motion to approve the minutes of the Regular and Closed Sessions of Monday, December 15, 2008. The motion carried unanimously.
5. Recognition of Special Guests: Chair Barnes wished everyone present a Happy New Year and welcomed them to the first regular meeting of 2009.
6. Public Comments: None.
7. Public Hearing:  
Jacky Eubanks, Planning, Parks and Development Director came forward to request the Board hold a public hearing regarding an application to the N.C. Division of Community Assistance for a \$4.9

million grant to purchase, rehabilitate and sell previously foreclosed properties in Catawba County to first time homebuyers. Sherry Log from the Western Piedmont Council of Government joined Mr. Eubanks in this presentation. Through the Housing and Economic Recovery Act of 2008, the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development developed a Neighborhood Stabilization Program to allocate funds to states and local governments with greatest need, based on the number and percentage of home foreclosures, homes financed with a "subprime mortgage related loan", and homes in default or delinquency in each state or local government. North Carolina is expected to receive \$52,303,004. Catawba County is the only county in the region eligible to apply. Applications are due on February 2, 2009. Eligible activities include financing mechanisms for purchase and redevelopment of foreclosed residential properties; purchase and rehabilitation of abandoned or foreclosed homes and residential properties for sale, rent or redevelopment (price negotiated must be at least 15% below appraised value); establishment of land banks for foreclosed homes; demolition of blighted properties; redevelopment of demolished or vacant properties; and establishment of land banks.

After the background information was presented to the Board, Board members voiced their concerns regarding the number of foreclosures occurring in the county, the hardships being faced by low income families and noted should grant funds be received and the rehabilitation of the foreclosed home undertaken, these actions would generate economic activity for the county as well as assist first-time homebuyers. Commissioner Hunsucker said he had received a call from a citizen who was concerned about the County getting into the mortgage business and it was clarified that the program's initial intent was to help Banks that were holding these properties and not for the County to become holders of the mortgages. During the public hearing one citizen (David Myers) came forward to question the County's experience in rehabilitating properties and Planning and Development Director Jacky Eubanks assured him that the County had successfully rehabilitated over 100 homes, had trained rehabilitation specialists who met all the necessary education requirements, had had no findings of any problems with properties the County had completed and worked closely with the Home Builders Association on all these projects. Vice-Chair Lynn Lail made a motion to approve this grant application. The motion carried unanimously.

8. Appointments.

Commissioner Barbara Beatty recommended the reappointment of Donna Herman for a 2<sup>nd</sup> term and Tommy Luckadoo for a first term on the Catawba County Board of Adjustment with these terms expiring 11/30/2011. Commissioner Beatty also recommended the reappointment of Trent Cloninger for a 5<sup>th</sup> term on the Catawba Planning and Zoning Board, expiring 11/30/2011 and the appointment of Bruce Ikard for an unexpired term on the Town of Maiden Planning Board to replace Aundria Jones who resigned. Mr. Ikard's term will expire 06/30/2010. Commissioner Beatty recommended the following reappointments of the following Volunteer Fire Department Trustees, Fireman's Relief Fund: Allen Biggerstaff (Propst Station) for a 2<sup>nd</sup> term; Glenn Boston (Oxford Station) for an 8<sup>th</sup> term; Bell Hefner (Mt. View Station) for an 8<sup>th</sup> term; Danny Setzer (Sherrills Ford Station) for a 3<sup>rd</sup> term; Darrel Turbyfill (Bandys Station) for a 2<sup>nd</sup> term and Fitzhugh Young (Cooksville Station) for an 8<sup>th</sup> term and the appointment of Robert Huffman (St. Stephens Station) for a first term to replace Steve Mains. All these reappointments/appointments will expire 12/31/2010. Vice-Chair Lynn Lail recommended the appointment of Cindy Yount for a 5<sup>th</sup> term on the Resource and Referral Service Board, term expiring 12/31/2010. Chair Katherine Barnes and Commissioner Dan Hunsucker recommended the following people be appointed to the newly formed Catawba County Agricultural Advisory Board: Ira Cline and Clarence Hood, Jr. for three year terms expiring 01/20/2012; Jeff Elmore, David McCart and Kenneth Arrowood for two year terms expiring 01/20/2011, and Howard Reinhardt and Gene Wilson for one year terms expiring 01/20/2010. These recommendations came in the form of a motion. The motion carried unanimously.

9. Consent Agenda:

County Manager J. Thomas Lundy presented the following two items on the consent agenda:

a. A request from Catawba County Schools to appropriate and transfer \$95,281 to demolish the buildings on the site of the old St. Stephens Elementary School and clear the debris from the property and waive the County landfill fees for the disposal of the debris. Since the old St. Stephens Elementary property closed in August 2005, the structures have had numerous break-ins and incidents of vandalism and theft. Catawba County Schools was notified by the City of Hickory on

November 7, 2008 that the property is in violation of several city safety codes and was given 90 days to abate the violations cited. The initial cost to bring the property into compliance with the code has been estimated at \$15,000 to \$20,000, but the greater problem of an unoccupied building would remain. Boarding up this facility would only result in continuing costs for constant maintenance and upkeep, since it is already being used as a shelter for vagrants. Since the buildings are no longer useful for any purpose, the more cost effective solution would be to remove them. Catawba County Schools has obtained a proposal to demolish the buildings and clear the property for \$88,281. Demolition of the property will result in approximately 3500 tons of debris to be disposed of in the County landfill. Catawba County Schools requested that the County waive landfill fees for this project, for an estimated savings to the school system of \$68,250 plus \$500 for asbestos removal. The County does not have the authority to waive a \$2 per ton State tax implemented this year, so an additional \$7000 will be required to pay that tax. Catawba County Schools requested transfer of \$10,000 from a completed Balls Creek Elementary sewer project and \$24,315 from a completed Maiden High project to help meet these costs. The remaining \$60,966 was requested from the Schools Capital Projects fund balance. The following appropriations apply:

Supplemental Appropriation:

420-750100-690100	Fund Balance Applied	\$60,966
420-750100-863200-31120-3-01	St. Stephens Elem. (old) Demolition	\$60,966

Transfer of Appropriations From:

420-750100-863200-31102-3-02	Balls Creek Sewer	\$10,000
420-750100-863200-31114-4-02	Maiden High Infrastructure	\$24,315

Transfer of Appropriations To:

420-750100-863200-31120-3-01	St. Stephens Elem. (old) Demolition	\$34,315
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b. A request for a change to the meeting time of its subcommittees from 8:30 a.m. to 8:00 a.m. on the Monday prior to the Board's regularly scheduled meetings, which would become effective upon approval. Staff has historically set a day and time for subcommittee meetings to best fit the schedules of the Commissioners who sit on these committees and has adjusted the set meeting time as necessary. Due to a recent change in time commitments of a subcommittee member, a change of the current meeting time of the subcommittees was requested to better fit the members' schedules.

Chair Barnes asked if any Commissioner wished for an item or items to be removed from the consent agenda and considered individually. None were requested. Commissioner Barger made a motion to approve the consent agenda. The motion carried unanimously.

10. Departmental Reports:

A. Social Services.

John Eller, Social Services Director, presented a request for the Board to endorse the efforts of an Aging Leadership Planning Team to build a livable and senior-friendly community. In 1991, Catawba County completed a strategic planning effort called ElderPlan, which served as a blueprint for quality living for older adults. There have been no additional strategic planning efforts regarding older adults since that time. North Carolina is in the midst of a significant demographic transition. The North Carolina Division of Aging and Adult Services reports North Carolina ranked 10th in the number of persons age 50 and older in 2004. Many of the oldest baby boomers will retire during this decade. Catawba County's population of persons age 60 and over is expected to grow by over 58% from 2008 to 2030.

The Western Piedmont Council of Government's Area Agency on Aging and Catawba County Social Services have joined forces to create an Aging Planning Leadership Team to develop a plan that addresses the needs of adults age 60 and over. This Team will focus on eight components of a livable and senior-friendly community. The first phase will focus on healthy aging, access and choice in services and supports, safety and security, and public accountability and responsiveness. The second phase will focus on physical and accessible environment, economic security, technology, and social and cultural opportunity. Each phase will last 9-12 months with the entire project spanning 18 to 24 months. At the conclusion of this process, (estimated May 2011) a written plan will be

developed outlining the issues addressed, unmet and under met needs, and strategies to serve as Catawba County's guide to building a livable, senior-friendly community. The Board expressed its support of this plan but requested further research, identification and recruiting be conducted for proposed members of the steering committee and will consider members for its steering committee at the February 2, 2009 Board of Commissioners Meeting. Chair of the Social Services Board Karen Yausey came forward to voice the Social Services support of this effort and praised all who had contributed thus far. Commissioner Hunsucker made a motion to endorse this proposed plan as well as the plan outlined in #2 below. The motion carried unanimously.

2. Also included in Mr. Eller's presentation was a request for the Board to endorse the efforts of Social Services, in partnership with key community stakeholders, to create a consolidated Children's Agenda for Catawba County through a strategic planning process, and to consider the establishment of an initial Children's Agenda Planning Committee. This was presented in a powerpoint that was combined with the above item. This agenda, to be developed by January 2010, would be used by community organizations, foundations, government and community leaders to inform planning efforts, address service gaps and identify 2010 legislative priorities for overarching issues which impact children and their families.

In summer 2008, Dawn Wilson, Special Projects Coordinator at Social Services, summarized information provided by several community leaders already engaged in various community-wide initiatives, task forces, committees and organizations serving children. The summary and a subsequent feedback group noted the lack of a unified Children's Agenda and data clearinghouse in the county. Participants felt an effort should be made to enhance and link the work of existing task forces, and to shape planning and advocacy efforts in the future.

The purpose of a Children's Strategic Agenda planning process is to bring together community leaders, and representatives from the current county-wide initiatives regarding specific children's issues, to establish a cohesive agenda of prioritized children's issues in our community. The goal of this agenda is to inform community organizations, and government and community leaders for future planning efforts, and for funding and legislative support for issues impacting children and their families.

A Children's Agenda Planning Group would be appointed to review and expand a summary of local strategic initiatives currently underway; align and identify overarching issues across task forces; review key data indicators and pending state and federal legislative initiatives that could affect children's issues; determine the issues not currently being addressed locally; and develop a Children's Agenda Action Plan of prioritized issues and action items for agencies serving children, community leaders, legislators and other elected officials to focus on over the next 3 to 5 years. The Board expressed its support of this agenda but again reserved the appointment of persons to the Planning Committee until the February 2, 2009 Board of Commissioners Meeting for the same reasons listed in items 1 above.

#### B. Finance

Rodney Miller, Finance Director and Dr. Garrett Hinshaw, Catawba Valley Community College President, presented a request for the Board to appropriate \$950,000 from the School Construction Fund to purchase property adjacent to the Catawba Valley Community College (CVCC) campus to be used as a Center for Emerging Manufacturing Solutions. CVCC contacted the County a few weeks ago regarding the sale of the former Fire Mountain Restaurant site (currently Ryan's Steakhouse), adjacent to the community college property. The CVCC Foundation previously owned this site and sold it to Fire Mountain Restaurant in 2004 for \$1.3 million. The restaurant has since gone out of business. The selling price for the site, including the building, is \$1.2 million. It has a tax value of \$2.2 million. In fiscal year 2007/08, the Board set aside two cents of the property tax rate to be used for financing school and community college construction over a four-year period. Phase one of a new Industrial and Technical Education Building, estimated at \$9 million, was planned for the fourth year of this funding cycle (Fiscal Year 2010/11). CVCC has approximately \$250,000 available for the purchase, leaving a balance of \$950,000 needed. This \$250,000 is revenue generated by testing and services CVCC supplies to local industries and does not come from state funds. CVCC plans to convert the building to a Center for Emerging Manufacturing Solutions and has proposed to

delay the construction of the Industrial and Technical Education Building until the next four-year construction cycle, beginning in fiscal year 2011/12, and use those funds towards the balance for this property. It is expected that some funds will remain from a project funded last year to repair structural damage to several buildings on the CVCC campus. The repair project will be completed later this year and any remaining funds, estimated at approximately \$100,000, will be pledged towards the purchase of the former Fire Mountain Restaurant property. Commissioner Barger made a motion to approve these appropriations. The motion carried unanimously. The following appropriations apply:

423-740050-690100	Fund Balance Appropriated	\$950,000
423-740100-862200-34100-1-01	CVCC – Land Purchase	\$950,000

11. Other Items of Business: None

12. Attorneys' Report. None

13. Manager's Report.

Assistant County Manager Lee Worsley presented a request for the Board to consider adding an item to its previously adopted legislative agenda which would support enabling legislation to allow the City of Hickory and the City of Conover to consider an increase in the room occupancy tax for economic development. Currently, the room occupancy tax for Catawba County is 20% below the average room occupancy tax for other jurisdictions in North Carolina. This gap puts the Convention Center and the Convention and Visitor's Bureau at a disadvantage when it comes to recruiting and retaining visitors clients for the Convention Center.

Catawba County supports the Tourism Development Authority and the Hickory Metro Convention & Visitors Bureau in their efforts to obtain special legislation from the General Assembly to raise the room occupancy tax in Catawba County from 5% to 6% to be more in line with other counties and to bring in additional revenues for tourism related activities such as additional parking at the convention center. Legislation would enable the City of Hickory and the City of Conover to levy the additional occupancy tax, if their governing boards choose. At least three of the area hotel owners are supportive of this action and acknowledge the need for more parking at the Convention to retaining shows and get new shows to use the Center. Vice-Chair Lail made a motion to add this item to the legislative agenda to support enabling legislation for the City of Hickory and the City of Conover to consider an increase in the room occupancy tax for economic development. The motion carried unanimously.

13. Adjournment: Commissioner Hunsucker made a motion to adjourn at 8:30 p.m. The motion carried unanimously.

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Katherine W. Barnes, Chair  
Board of Commissioners

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Barbara E. Morris, County Clerk